

Information UPDATE



Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction/John T. Benson, State Superintendent/125 S. Webster St./P.O. Box 7841/ Madison, WI 53707-7841

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TO: District Administrators, CESA Administrators, CCDEB Administrators,
Directors of Special Education and Pupil Services, and Other Interested Parties

FROM: Juanita S. Pawlisch, Ph.D., Assistant Superintendent
Division for Learning Support: Equity and Advocacy

SUBJECT: The Role of Educational Interpreters

The purpose of this Informational Update is to respond to questions regarding the role of educational interpreters for children who are deaf or hard of hearing. The State Superintendent's Advisory Committee on the Education of Pupils who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing has endorsed this bulletin. It includes both legal requirements and best practice.

1. What is the role of an educational interpreter?

The fundamental role of an educational interpreter is to facilitate communication between deaf students and others including teachers, other school staff and students in educational environments. Educational interpreters are responsible for providing the interpreted messages in a language or mode that is understandable to the child who is deaf or hard of hearing. The language or mode of communication of the child may be American Sign Language (ASL), or other English sign forms used by deaf and hard of hearing students. In addition to interpreting spoken words and signs, the nuances of spoken English including the meta-linguistic information which surrounds a message as portrayed through the speaker's tone of voice or affect, are a part of the message.

2. What duties in addition to interpreting are appropriate for educational interpreters?

Interpreting for the student is the primary duty of the educational interpreter. This responsibility may occur in a variety of settings beyond the classroom including, but not limited to, field trips, club meetings, after school programs, assemblies, extra-curricular activities, school counseling sessions, and school sponsored trips.

Other duties which *may be performed while not interpreting* include other school activities such as recess or hall duty, helping children with the bus, or assisting other students in the classroom **in the same manner as is expected of teachers**. Educational interpreters may provide this support *as long as there is no interference with their primary duty of providing needed interpreting for the deaf or hard of hearing student*.

The educational interpreter functions on the educational team along with the general education teacher, special education teacher, building principal and others as appropriate. The role of the educational interpreter will vary in a manner appropriate to the student's maturity and ability to effectively use an interpreter. It should not be assumed that the educational interpreter is to function as the classroom aide or caretaker for the student. Questions about the student's academic progress and needs should be directed to the teacher.

Student behavior expectations and discipline procedures are established and carried out by the teacher. While the educational interpreter is a member of the school staff and carries out responsibilities as defined in district policy, it is the classroom teacher who is responsible for the behavior program and discipline of all students in the classroom including the student who is deaf or hard of hearing.

3. What may be expected of educational interpreters regarding tutoring support?

Often the educational interpreter will be asked to tutor for a deaf or hard of hearing student. This tutoring should be done under the supervision of the classroom teacher or the teacher of deaf and hard of hearing students. Tutoring may include review of material that has been recently presented in class, or the introduction of new vocabulary, including the need to establish signs for vocabulary that may be used in an upcoming lesson. For this reason, it is important for teachers to share their lesson plans ahead of time so that the educational interpreter can properly prepare for class.

Tutoring does not involve the following aspects: presentation of new material, material missed due to the students' absence, or remedial services for student's experiencing significant difficulty in understanding academic content.

4. Why should educational interpreters have preparation time?

An important aspect of effective interpretation is knowledge of the material being presented. In order to maximize the interpreter's value when working in the classroom, it is important for the educational interpreter and teacher to maintain regular open communication regarding the activities of the school day, including lesson plans and expectations of student outcomes.

To be effective, educational interpreters need preparation time in order to review lesson plans, pre-read text books and meet with teachers to discuss lesson goals. An especially challenging task is the interpretation of videotapes or other school programs, including music programs or special speakers. Educational interpreters need to preview videotapes, and, when possible, rehearse for special school programs ahead of time. This makes daily preparation time imperative.

5. What are the expectations and responsibilities of the district when providing interpreting service during extra-curricular activities or school sponsored events?

Educational environments include all aspects of the school day including extra-curricular activities, clubs, and school sponsored trips. Deaf and hard of hearing students who participate in extra-curricular activities may require interpreter services. The additional time required for these extra-curricular activities such as sports and other school sponsored events needs to be considered when planning budgets for interpreter services. Events such as school plays or concerts often require preparation time in addition to actual interpreting time. The work done by an educational interpreter after the normal school hours is generally considered an added duty beyond the interpreter's normal work week.

Educational interpreters often are asked to teach informal sign language classes or clubs for staff and students. When an interpreter teaches a sign language class, preparation time and materials are important factors to be considered. This is not to be confused with ASL courses offered as foreign language credit. ASL courses for credit require a teaching license with demonstrated skill in the use of American Sign Language or verification of teaching skill that can be obtained through the American Sign Language Teachers Association (ASLTA).

6. What is meant by the terms *transliteration*, *interpretation*, *oral translation*, *real-time captioning*, and *cued speech*?

Interpreting for deaf or hard of hearing students consists of three basic forms; *transliteration*, *interpretation* and *oral translation*.

- *Transliteration* is the process of working between spoken English and a signed form of English.
- *Interpretation* is the process of working between spoken English and American Sign Language.
- *Oral translation* is the process of working with spoken English and lip-reading through a silent form of English that is more visible on the lips.

While these terms reflect different forms of “interpretation,” for the purpose of this Information Update, the term interpreting is used to encompass all three.

- *Real-time captioning* (RTC) is another option for students in accessing their education. A real-time captioner is someone who has completed training similar to a court room reporter who records the classroom conversation which is then transmitted onto a computer screen for the student to read. This is an option generally for students who suddenly lose their hearing after developing reading skills, who do not use sign language to communicate, and who are middle school or older with grade level reading proficiency. At this time, there is no DPI license for someone providing real-time captioning.
- *Cued Speech* is a system of handshapes used to represent the phonemic aspects of speech. It is not sign language. The DPI license for educational interpreters does not address Cued Speech. The person providing this service may be licensed as an educational interpreter if they meet the license requirements, or, if not, as an educational aide with the understanding that they are to demonstrate skill in using Cued Speech.

7. What considerations are important when more than one deaf or hard of hearing student is placed in the same classroom?

The IEP team determines the communication / language needs of each student. Different children inherently have a preference for the type of communication / language that will best meet their needs to understand their world. Therefore, it is not appropriate for a school district to establish a single language or mode of communication to be used with all children who are deaf or hard of hearing, but rather to address the communication means based on each child’s identified language preference.

When more than one student who is deaf or hard of hearing, with different language needs are placed in the same regular education classroom, along with the services of an educational interpreter, decisions need to be made regarding how the interpreter is to approach the task. There may be times when it is appropriate for more than one educational interpreter to be present, one who transliterates while the other interprets.

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8. Are there unique qualities of an educational interpreter assigned to work with deaf or hard of hearing children in an early childhood special education or preschool classroom?

Young children who are prelingually deaf or hard of hearing frequently go unidentified as a child with an impairment until they are almost 2 years old. Often these families struggle to obtain the needed services to support the language development of their child so the child often enters school without a strong language base, very limited general knowledge and, for children who use sign language, limited, if any, knowledge of sign language. This language delay should not be confused with cognitive limitations. Deaf or hard of hearing children have the same range of cognitive abilities as nondisabled children.

Developmentally, these children often enter school in need of language exposure both formally and informally. Very few of these preschoolers will be able to use an interpreter in a typical fashion. Educational interpreters are not trained to *teach* but serve as language models. Exposure to language is key to the child's development. Play activities and sign language instruction to all the children in the classroom support an environment of communication peers. Classrooms designed for young children are language rich environments, however the ability for a child who is deaf or hard of hearing to access this language directly and therefore develop literacy is clearly challenged. For some students, an educational interpreter may not be 'the solution' to providing an appropriate education for the child. A teacher who is knowledgeable in facilitating the early language development of young deaf and hard of hearing children may better address the child's language developmental needs. When using an interpreter to provide access to language, a strong team connection with the educational interpreter, early childhood special education or preschool teacher and teacher of children who are deaf or hard of hearing needs to be established and maintained.

9. How are a child's communication needs determined?

The special considerations section defined in IDEA '97 614(d)(3)(B)(iv) and 115.787(3)(b)4. WI Statutes require that the IEP team address the communication needs of each child who is deaf or hard of hearing. This includes information from the child's parents regarding the child's language or communication mode. The IEP team is to consider:

- the child's language and communication needs,
- opportunities for direct communication with peers and professional personnel in the child's language and communication mode,
- the academic level and full range of needs including opportunities for direct instruction in the child's language or communication mode.

10. Should educational interpreters attend and participate in IEP meetings?

While it is not required that educational interpreters attend IEP meetings, as a member of the educational team the educational interpreter can provide vital information to the IEP process. Educational interpreters spend much of their day in direct interaction with the student who is deaf or hard of hearing in the classroom which gives the educational interpreter valuable insight related to the language and communication needs of the student in this environment.

There are two situations where an interpreter, other than the student's educational interpreter, may be needed.

- when the educational interpreter for the student will be participating in the IEP meeting, or
- if it is anticipated that the IEP meeting will continue more than two hours.

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A common misperception is that educational interpreters, if participating in the IEP meeting, can, at the same time, function as a participant *and* as an interpreter for the student or, in some situations, for parents who are deaf or hard of hearing. It is important to clearly identify her/his role as participant or interpreter.

When the student's educational interpreter is a participant on the IEP team, it may be possible for this educational interpreter to interpret with a second interpreter. When the student's educational interpreter is contributing to the IEP review and development, it should be understood that s/he would not be interpreting during this time. Signing and speaking at the same time (simultaneous communication) tends to impact negatively on the quality of the message in sign language. A discussion with the interpreters regarding their roles prior to the meeting will assist in identifying roles and support a smooth flowing meeting.

If it is anticipated that the IEP meeting will continue beyond two hours, it is suggested that two interpreters be provided. Fatigue factors, both physically and mentally (especially after working a full school day) may inhibit a single interpreter's ability to maintain clarity throughout the meeting.

11. What are guidelines for hiring an interpreter for parents who are deaf or hard of hearing?

While the basic function of educational interpreters is the same as that of freelance interpreters, a critical difference is often the skill level in understanding the message of the deaf adult who uses American Sign Language. Not all educational interpreters are able to perform the task of interpreting for parents in meetings or for other school programs made available to the public therefore a district may need to consider hiring a freelance interpreter. Best practice is to ask the deaf parents if they have a preference and attempt to contact that interpreter. Parents may request an interpreter with Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) certification or Wisconsin Interpreting/Transliterating Assessment (WITA) level (1=high, 4 = low), or they may request an interpreter by name. To contact freelance interpreters, see the list at the back of this bulletin.

12. How are educational interpreter services written into the IEP?

The services of the educational interpreter can be stated on the IEP as either a supplementary service or as a related service. This includes a statement of the frequency, location and duration of this service.

13. What are the required qualifications of an educational interpreter?

It is required by DPI that people working as an educational interpreter in a PK-12 setting have the DPI license #884. Interpreting is a highly specialized skill that requires extensive training and practice over a long period of time. Since classroom content changes with the age of the student and subject area the skills and knowledge necessary can vary significantly. Educational interpreters need to have sufficient knowledge of the content and technical terms in order to interpret meaningfully.

In July 1992 the DPI established the #884 license for educational interpreters. This license includes coursework typically found in interpreter preparation programs. In addition, educational interpreters must complete 6 credits or the equivalent every five years in order to renew their license. At that time, many educational interpreters who had not completed formal interpreter training who were working in the public schools were granted this license. In 1997 the DPI put into place a requirement for all educational interpreters to pass an established assessment demonstrating a minimum score in order to renew their license.

This came about in part due to a push from the community to verify a minimum skill level for all educational interpreters that addresses the qualification standards being set for interpreters in Wisconsin and nationwide.

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The Department has adopted the use of the *Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA)*; a tool specially designed to evaluate the skills of interpreters in K - 12 settings. This diagnostic tool awards a score from 1 (low) to 5 (high), with a minimum score of 3.0 required in order for educational interpreters to

renew their license. In addition to quality assessment, this diagnostic tool provides extensive feedback to the interpreter on their work supporting their professional development. The first group of educational interpreters who must demonstrate this proficiency through the *EIPA* are those whose license expires June 30, 2002. The only exception to this requirement is for those educational interpreters who function only as oral translators.

In addition to the DPI license, there are several other evaluation systems which measure the competency of interpreting skill. These are through the:

- 1) The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (RID) which awards a certificate called Certificate of Interpretation (CI), the Certificate of Transliteration (CT), and Oral Transliteration Certificate (OTC),
- 2) The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) which awards five levels of certification (5 being high), and
- 3) The Wisconsin Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, which awards four levels through the Wisconsin Interpretation / Transliteration Assessment (WITA) (1 being high).

14. Educational interpreters often refer to the Interpreter Code of Ethics. What are they referring to?

The *Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (RID)* is a national organization that has an established code of ethics for sign language interpreters which provides a foundation for ethical practices for all interpreters. The Code of Ethics includes guidelines on confidentiality, professional development and professional conduct. While educational interpreters in Wisconsin are not required to be members of the RID, the ethics outlined by this organization serve as a good guide for professional ethics.

The relationship of the student who is deaf or hard of hearing and the educational interpreter is intimate due to its unique intense one-to-one relationship that can at times be challenging to both. As an employee of the school district, and member of the educational team, the educational interpreter is required to follow the policies established by the school district. However, educational interpreters, by the nature of their job, have a dual role in the classroom; to maintain the trust of the student while functioning as a member of the educational team. Due to the sensitive relationship between the student and the educational interpreter, there may be times when some information of a personal nature may remain confidential between the student and educational interpreter. Some questions from the staff or parents regarding the student may be appropriately referred to the student or teacher rather than asked of the interpreter.

15. Can I hire someone with the aide's #883 license who knows sign language to interpret for a child if it is only for a short time during the day or for young children instead of hiring an educational interpreter with the #884 license?

Whenever someone is expected to interpret for a student, even for one class period per day, this person must be able to demonstrate the skill needed to interpret. Someone with basic sign communication skills does not meet the qualifications needed to provide interpreting services. Understanding of sign language (or of any language) is the first level of skill upon which is built the skill necessary to learn the interpreting process. It is also important to note that the level of interpreting skill needed for young children, while different, is no less than the level of skill needed when interpreting for high school students.

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Someone who works with children who are deaf or hard of hearing may be licensed as an aide when working in the classroom with the teacher, on the bus for transportation safety, as a support for behavioral needs of the child, or in other similar situations.

16. Is there a resource for school districts when seeking appropriate evaluation tools and professional development opportunities for educational interpreters?

The Outreach staff of DPI includes the position of a sign communication specialist. This service is available to school districts when seeking support on the assessment of educational interpreters or assessment of the sign communication needs of students. This service is available at no cost to districts and can be reached by calling 1-800-832-9784.

For more information concerning this bulletin or the *Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA)*, please contact Carol Schweitzer, Consultant for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Programs and Educational Interpreter Services at (608) 266-7097.

This information update can also be accessed through the Internet:
<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsea/een/bulindex.html>

Attached: list of Interpreter Preparation Programs and Interpreter Referral Agencies in Wisconsin

List of Wisconsin and neighboring interpreter preparation programs

Northcentral Technical College
Educational Interpreter Technician Program
1000 Campus Drive
Wausau, WI 54401-1899
(715) 675-3331

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Interpreter Preparation Program
Enderis – 6th Floor
PO Box 413
Milwaukee, WI 53201
(414) 229-4820

Milwaukee Area Technical College
Interpreter Technician Program
700 West State Street
Milwaukee, WI 53233-1443
(414) 297-6784

Gateway Technical College
Interpreter Preparation Program
400 County Road H
Elkhorn, WI 53121-2020
(414) 741-6134

St Paul Technical College
Interpreter Preparation Program
235 Marshall
St. Paul, MN 55102
(612) 221-1343

College of St. Catherine – St. Mary's Campus
Interpreter Preparation Program
2500 South Sixth Street
Minneapolis, MN 55454
(612) 690-7700

Harper Community College
Sign Language Interpreting Program
1200 West Algonquin Road
Palatine, IL 60067
(847) 925-6000 x 6415

Waubonsee Community College
Interpreter Training Project
5 East Galena Blvd.
Aurora, IL 60506
(630) 466-7900 x 2504

Columbia College
Interpreter Preparation Program
600 South Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60605
(312) 663-1600 x 7174

List of interpreter referral agencies:

IndependenceFirst Interpreter Coordination Services
600 West Virginia Street, Suite 301
Milwaukee, WI 53207-1516
(414) 291-7535

Interpreter Connection, Inc.
621 North Sherman Avenue
Madison, WI 53704-4452
(608) 241-4660

Professional Interpreting Enterprise, LLC
10412 West Coldspring Road
Greenfield, WI 53228
(414) 425-5536

DeaFirst
2116 International Lane
Madison, WI 53704
(608) 245-3380